

VZCZCXRO6044  
RR RUEHAST  
DE RUEHBS #2543/01 2011027  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 201027Z JUL 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2634  
INFO RUCNOSC/OSCE POST COLLECTIVE  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0197

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 002543

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [BE](#) [OSCE](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: FIREWORKS AT OSCE ELECTION MONITORING CONFERENCE

BRUSSELS 00002543 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Belgian OSCE Chairmanship focused its attention on election monitoring at a conference in Brussels on July 12. The technical theme was the need for continued strict adherence to observation guidelines when monitoring. The political message was that ODIHR remains the most competent mechanism for election monitoring, but needs to establish better coordination with other monitoring agencies. Several speakers made a point of stressing that observations are not meant to influence results but act as impartial witness to aid in the transparency of the process. Criticisms of Russia, both implied and direct, triggered a strong reaction by the Russian Ambassador. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On July 12 Ambassador Korologos attended the opening of a conference entitled: "Building Democracy Through OSCE: Electoral Assistance and Observation." FM De Gucht was unable to attend the conference and deliver his keynote address due to the passing of his father.

¶3. (U) Several speakers, including OSCE/ODIHR Director Ambassador Christian Strohal, pointed out that the growing number of election monitoring groups has caused inconsistencies in post-electoral reporting. Belgian Minister of State and member of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Francois-Xavier De Donnea, discussed the need to unify election observation processes through utilization of standards drawn from the Copenhagen Commitments to free and fair elections, and consensus-building in post-electoral declarations. He went on to stress the need for election observation in both developing and established democracies stating that in today's climate election observation is a necessary condition of a healthy democratic state. De Donnea also proposed developing a system that opens the channels of communication between qualified election monitoring organizations. Note: De Donnea is conducting a review of election monitoring for Belgian CiO De Gucht. He has observed several monitoring missions throughout the year. End Note.

¶4. (SBU) The main event of the conference was an unexpected exchange between panel members and Russia and Belarus representatives. Strohal set the tone early with his statement that while progress in electoral processes is witnessed in many Central and Western European nations, in the East a backslide is occurring. Implicitly criticizing Russia, Strohal said many participating Eastern European states and their allies are committed to the rhetoric of democracy, but not to its full implementation.

¶5. (SBU) Following up with a more direct speech, President Emeritus of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Bruce George, a UK MP, directly attacked the behavior of Russia and CIS electoral missions. In his opinion Russia and its allies want to control ODIHR and has significantly interfered with ODIHR

missions. George went on to share his views on the backsliding democracy in Russia. Russian Ambassador Vadim Lukov struck back, charging ODIHR with being slanted toward western preconceptions before ever entering a mission and calling it an organization "intolerant to outside criticism."

He also insisted that a double standard exists and that ODIHR is "blind in one-eye." Lukov's remarks were quickly rebuked by George, with Lukov walking out for most of the rebuttal. At the end of the exchange Lukov said such criticisms were reminiscent of the Cold War.

¶6. (U) Parliamentary leadership was also scrutinized. Anne Bourlond, a Belgian observer on several ODIHR missions remarked that when parliamentarians arrive a day - or hours - before commencement of an election and depart immediately thereafter, it only damages the credibility of missions and becomes a burden to monitors in the field. The Belgians told us OSCEPA Secretary General, Spencer Oliver, was invited but declined to attend, apparently in protest that George had been invited without consulting the OSCEPA Copenhagen office. George, for his part, chided critics who devalue ODIHR. The Belgians stressed the need for improved dialogue and coordination between OSCEPA monitors and ODIHR; this was supported by most speakers.

¶7. (SBU) A Belarus representative took up the Russian stance claiming it is ODIHR that lacks transparency. He concluded by inviting all members of the conference to attend a review of the Belarus elections to be held in Vienna by Belarus. Strohal made it clear he was, and still is, very happy to discuss observed discrepancies in electoral practices with Belarus officials. In response to why ODIHR found it necessary to enlist larger numbers of observers in Belarus and other eastern European state elections, Strohal stated past experiences have proved it necessary in certain countries with history of corrupt elections citing previous election results in Belarus. He also reaffirmed the original ODIHR report on the Belarus elections contained only what was

BRUSSELS 00002543 002.2 OF 002

directly observed, without embellishment.  
KOROLOGOS

.